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SUBJECT: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT IDPS

(U) 1. SUMMARY: USAID obtains data on internal displacement and returns in Iraq through several sources that include the United Nations (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Government of Iraq and implementing partners. Though mostly reliable, the information is incomplete due to factors such as the security environment, lack of access, and the rapid movement of the displaced. This is common in many displacement situations, which are rarely conducive to comprehensive surveys. In the Iraq context, many IDPs do not stay when they return to their place of origin, but merely return to pick up financial incentives, personal belongings or to conduct private affairs. USAID has not yet received nor tracked reliable IDP returns statistics. END SUMMARY.

How Data is Collected

(U) 2. Different organizations have different approaches to data collection. The members of UNHCR Cluster F - the UN umbrella group focused on IDPs in Iraq - have relied on questionnaire data gathered by IOM, UNHCR and Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) during interviews with and registration of IDPs. The three-page, Rapid Assessment questionnaire used by IOM consists of 48 questions on topics such as family profile, place of origin and property, humanitarian and security situations in the current location, intentions, documentation and freedom of movement, food, healthcare, water and sanitation, and capacity and needs.

Different Sources, Different Numbers

(U) 3. The primary purpose of the data collection is needs assessment to determine appropriate emergency assistance and community needs. IOM does not collect names of IDPs or ask to view official documents to verify place of origin and displaced status. As such, IOM methods are not designed to track secondary displacements or returns at this time.

(U) 4. UNHCR Cluster F data reveals that approximately 56 percent of IDPs are renting housing, 19 percent live with host families, 24 percent live in public buildings or former military barracks and 1 percent are in tented camps. Of these, many do not register as IDPs in their new region of residence. As a result, the IDP populations in some areas are scattered and perhaps even inconspicuous in their new communities, making it difficult to reach out to the group as a whole.

(U) 5. The International Medical Corps (IMC) uses door-to-door interviews to gather data. This labor-intensive process is inherently limited in scope but allows for collection of more detailed information about a wider variety of issues. IMC is able to reach out to Iraqis who may be considering fleeing (potential IDPs) and therefore to estimate with slightly more precision future displacement and intended destinations. Data from all five USAID implementing partners focuses on displacement after the Samarah bombing in February 2006, as the sheer size of this group (currently estimated at more than 1.2 million) and the rapid rate at which they have been displaced has overloaded the capacity of local

infrastructures and posed the additional challenges of settling down and integrating into communities.

(U) 6. We are also aware that the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) publishes estimates of Iraq's overall displaced population by region. While each IDP source publishes slightly different data on IDP totals, the numbers are useful to gain a sense of order of magnitude of the problem and the rate at which displacement is growing relative to the existing displaced population. USAID policy has been to use the UNHCR Cluster F numbers to give us the most reliable sense of needs.

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Ministry Of Displacement and Migration/Ministry of Trade
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(U) 7. MoDM currently employs between 300 and 400 staff, including those at Headquarters and in the Ministry's 16 Branch Offices. Many of these additional staff are working at the Ministry on temporary contracts. We understand that MoDM expects its 2008 budget, once approved, to cover the salaries of an additional 200 to 300 staff at Headquarters and in the Branch Offices.

(U) 8. USAID understands MODM is reporting some returns are occurring and that some registered IDPs have submitted returnee claims. USAID is attempting to verify this information through its implementing partners and through the PRTs and is in discussion with its NGO implementing partners to determine how to best assist with return assessments, monitoring and assistance should returnee numbers increase,

(U) 9. It is worthwhile to note that the only official statistics on displaced populations are published by the Ministry of Trade (MoT), which manages the Iraq's Public Distribution System of rations. Some argue that the MoT underestimates the problem, as many IDPs do not or cannot register with PDS in their new communities and local groups manipulate numbers for political reasons.

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